

Letter from S. T. Walker to Alexander Graham Bell, April 23, 1892

STATE OF KANSAS . SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE . INSTITUTION FOR THE EDUCATION misc Please put on file in OF THE DEAF AND DUMB . 412 S. T. WALKER, SUP'T . OLATHE. April 23d, 1892. Dr. Alexander Graham Bell' Washington, D.C. Dear Mr. Bell:

We have just had a delightful visit from Miss True who left here last evening direct for Little Rock.

In our conversation while here, I suggested a plan to her, which I have been thinking of proposing to you. It is in relation to a mechanical contrivance for school rooms that will at all times through the school-hour be presenting to the eye of the class a “ stream ” of language. My plan is crude, but something like this: Have printed in large letters on heavy paper (mounted?) such language as will bring in use all manner of words, phrases and colloquial expressions as are heard by hearing children. The matter can be prepared either with or without a definite object in view, other than the aim to present to the eye language , and the variety may be unlimited. This “stream” of language to be printed on long strips of paper of suitable width (not less than 12 inches) and from 300 to 500 feet long, arranged so as to roll and unroll itself before the class continuously. The length of exposed surface preferably the full width of the school-room, so that the beginning of a sentence may readily be discovered by the eye. The mechanism operating slowly, unrolling and exposing the surface to the class. A score of these rolls could be published, the matter being graded, and each primary room could be fitted up with the mechanism and such rolls as would best suit a particular class, be selected. My belief is that many wasted moments of unoccupied time might thus be utilized. Language is acquired by the hearing child almost unconsciously and without effort by having it in unstinted and varied

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quantities falling on the ear. We must seek some other sense by which to approximate Nature's plan. The eye in this case must do the work of the ear to as great an extent as it is possible for a dissimilar organ to do, the work of another organ. If the plan requires much effort, it is in, that measure defective. Effort must be reduced to a minimum if we are to imitate Nature's method of giving a vernacular. If this proposed "stream" of conversation or language in its variety of forms be made in an attractive and large form, so that it will both attract and hold the eye by its attractiveness I think we would find that many forms of phrases and expressions now so difficult to teach would be imparted by assimilation. No particular objection would be raised against a teacher if she wished to explain certain expressions, especially if asked to do so by a pupil, but the aim would be to put the language before the eye and keep it moving, relying upon the curiosity of the child to follow it, and "omnipresence" to accomplish the intended object. I will try to make a rough sketch displaying the "stream" at the end of a school-room so as to enable you to get my idea more clearly

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I believe the appliance would prove of much assistance in teaching. The rollers might be operated by heavy springs and clock-work.

may explain it be taken with the idea and she Miss True seemed to be taken with the idea and will probably confer with you about it.

Wishing you all possible success in your magnanimous work in behalf of the deaf, I remain

Yours Most Sincerely, S.T.Walker